



MAYOR BRETT P. SMILEY
CITY OF PROVIDENCE

May 13, 2025

Representative David A. Bennett
Chair, House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Testimony in Support of H6206, the Beverage Containers Recycling Act

Dear Chair Bennett and members of the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources,

I thank you and the other sponsors, Representatives Spears, McEntee, Carson, Boylan, McGaw, Cortvriend, Donovan, Handy, and Kazarian, for your leadership on the Beverage Container Recycling Act H6206 and for recognizing the urgent need for responsible, common-sense policy that tangibly and immediately addresses Rhode Island's plastic waste crisis.

The City of Providence strongly supports the passage of H6206, the Beverage Containers Recycling Act. This bill would establish a long-awaited Bottle Bill in Rhode Island, significantly improve recycling rates, reduce litter, prevent further plastic pollution in our ecosystems and waterways, and reduce municipal hauling and disposal costs.

This Bottle Bill would provide significant cost savings for municipal waste hauling in Providence and across municipalities in Rhode Island. Contaminated recycling loads currently cost the City \$2 million per year in tipping fees, and a modern Bottle Bill could save Providence more than \$615,000 every year in tipping fees. When the trash is combined with the single stream curbside recycling materials, all of the materials become trash that takes up capacity at the central landfill and causes the City to exceed our trash tonnage cap. Diverting clean, recyclable materials through the deposit program will ensure that the materials are properly recycled, reduce the City's recycling and trash tonnage, and save taxpayer dollars.

In Providence and across the state, beverage containers litter our neighborhoods and waterways. Despite decades of statewide and local efforts to reduce litter and improve recycling and waste management in Rhode Island, plastic debris and litter continue to pollute our communities. In Providence, beverage containers are a major culprit clogging our storm drains, exacerbating the flooding impacts of the more intense storms caused by climate change. Save The Bay notes that beverage containers specifically are the most frequently collected item during coastal cleanups. Beverage container litter is an accumulating issue.

City of Providence's Ongoing Waste Initiatives: The City of Providence is spearheading a multi-pronged and holistic waste management effort, including community composting opportunities and funding education and outreach for composting and recycling. Through a USDA compost grant, the City is supporting partner organizations in registering over 300 households for compost pickup and/or drop-off. Through an EPA SWIFR grant, the City's Departments of Sustainability and Public Works are working with a community partner organization, Zero Waste Providence, to conduct on-the-ground recycling education and outreach, targeting household-level contamination to increase recycling rates and decrease contaminated loads diverted to the landfill. Additionally, the City has committed to investing in new recycling and trash carts for residents of Providence to advance recycling goals, reduce tipping fees, and preserve the increasingly limited space at the landfill. A Bottle Bill is a critical complementary strategy to our ongoing commitments to improving waste management and reducing landfill loads in Providence.

The City of Providence enthusiastically supports the passage of the Beverage Containers Recycling Act H6206, as it would end the decades-long failure to meaningfully address our trash problem and plastic pollution crisis while achieving necessary savings in waste management costs for municipalities. States with Bottle Bills have less litter and higher recycling rates. According to a study conducted by the Container Recycling Institute, upon introduction of a Bottle Bill, beverage container litter was consistently reduced by 70-84%. Additionally, in states with Bottle Bills, recycling rates are consistently more than double the rates in states without one. As a state with a single landfill that is filling at an alarming rate, a Bottle Bill is an integral element of the solution to our waste management woes.

For the aforementioned reasons, including the shocking quantity of beverage container litter in Providence and across the state, the environmental impacts of micro and nanoplastics, the ongoing prioritization of sustainable waste management practices that the City has in progress, and the dramatic reduction in municipal waste hauling costs for Providence, I strongly support the passage of the Bottle Bill this year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brett P. Smiley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping tail on the final "y".

Mayor Brett P. Smiley